

# *It Is Written*

*A weekly publication of the  
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.*

*Vol. 3*

*June 6, 2021*

*No. 23*

## *God Is at Work in You!*

*By Matthew W. Bassford*

A few months ago, my co-worker, Clay, examined Philippians 2:12-13 in a sermon, dwelling especially on v. 13. I've known for years that brethren have a bad habit of focusing on "Work out your own salvation," to the exclusion of "It is God who is working in you." However, Clay's study of the latter point brought home something I had never realized before.

God is working in every obedient Christian. Right now. He is working in me. Right now. He is working in you. Right now.

To describe this as heartening would be an understatement! Like many preachers, I struggle with the temptation to believe the insidious lie of Malachi 3:14. The devil very much wants us to believe that it is useless to serve God. In this pandemic era of social isolation, reduced or nonexistent assembling, and Christians fighting and splitting churches over dumb stuff like wearing masks, he seems to have a stronger case than normal. Why not give up? It won't make any difference, right?

Wrong. Wrong, wrong, wrong, and wrong. Even if it is not obvious to us, the arc of history bends toward God. He will work out His will, He will accomplish His purpose, and He will glorify Himself through His people if they will let Him do it.

The health-and-wealth preachers have a point, kind of. God does have a plan for your life. However, His plan is not for you to enjoy earthly happiness. It is for you to put your nose to the grindstone and do right every single day, cheerfully, unflinching. If you do, He will use you to accomplish what He wants to accomplish.

We cannot know what that is, not this side of Jordan, at least, and there is no point in speculating. If you preach the gospel and nobody listens, that does not mean you have failed. If you fight to raise godly children but they fall away, that does not mean you have failed either. God knew that His people wouldn't listen to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, but He sent them anyway. Sometimes the Spirit convicts rather than converting, but that too is in accord with His purpose.

Throughout history, it always has seemed as though the cause of righteousness is failing. It seemed so when the wicked rejected Noah, when Israel sank into corruption in the time of the judges, when Solomon forsook the Lord, when the Israelites were carried captive, when Jesus was crucified, and when Saul shattered the Jerusalem church. God's people always appear to be given over to death. If it seems so in the present time, that should not surprise us.

Of course, the cause of God never actually does fail. Repeatedly, He brings about salvation in ways that no one else could have foreseen. He accomplishes His most spectacular works in the hours that seem darkest.

So it will be for us, if indeed we do not grow weary and lose heart. If we work, God will be at work in us, and He will succeed in His purpose. Go then, and work, whether preaching or teaching or supporting your family or raising your kids or watching your grandkids. Even if nobody else notices or cares, you can be certain that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

## **Not Our - But His Workmanship**

*By Bill Hall*

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

When one is baptized he becomes a new creation, but he is not the creation of any man. He is the workmanship of God.

He is not the workmanship of the person who converted him - not primarily, anyway. Man can teach, influence, persuade, and baptize; but only God can cleanse, forgive, raise a person to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, and give him life. He is God's creation - God's workmanship. Just as surely as no man could create an "Adam," just that surely can no man create a new creature in Christ.

Neither is one self-made. In Christ, one does not lift himself "by his own boot-straps." Christianity is not a "do-it-yourself" religion - not in the fullest sense. One does not effect his own salvation through his own merit. Rather, in obedience to the gospel and faithfulness as a Christian, he places himself as clay in God's hand, to become the work of the divine Potter, who molds, shapes, and perfects him that he might be fashioned in the image of his Son.

He is the workmanship of God because his salvation is "by grace through faith ... .. the gift of God" (vv. 8,9). If one's salvation were of meritorious works, he would not be the workmanship of God. This is the primary thrust of the passage.

The workmanship of God exists as a monument to his greatness. As a beautiful vessel is a monument to the greatness of a potter; as a beautiful painting is a monument to an artist; so a mature and perfected Christian is a monument to the marvelous power of God. Such a person is a product of God's grace and exists for "the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:6,12,14; 3:14-19). That God could take a Peter, a John, a Saul of Tarsus, an Aquila, a Priscilla, a John Mark, and mold him or her into the lovely vessel each became is a manifestation of his greatness. That he could do the same for people this writer has known and observed equally manifests his greatness. That he can and will do the same for me if I will but submit myself to his care in humble obedience, trust, and prayer is the greatest marvel of all. "I am so glad that Jesus loves me. . . . Jesus loves even me" (P.P. Bliss).

The workmanship of God must be handled with care. Such a person is special, precious, priceless to God. As one is cautious in handling a family heirloom or rare piece of pottery fashioned by the hands of a master, so he must be cautious in his handling of that creation which is the work of God. "For meat destroy not the work of God," Paul warned the Romans (Rom. 14:20). That person toward whose tender conscience you are showing little regard or whose soul you are placing in jeopardy is the work of God. Love that person. Appreciate him. Be tender toward him. Recognize his value. Handle with care!

The workmanship of God must never be content until it is brought to perfection. "Finish then thy new creation," Charles Wesley wrote in his familiar hymn "Love Divine." In keeping with this, Paul could express his confidence in the Philippian Christians, "that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6,7). Only those who remain in the Potter's hands until brought to completion and perfection become vessels of honor. All others become marred and fit only for destruction (2 Tim. 2:19-21).

Let no man, then, boast of himself. Self-righteousness has no place in the heart of a Christian. If any man boast, "let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31) and "in the cross of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6:14). We are his workmanship.